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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model of planning implementation that makes use of the concept that for successful planning, the organization must be changed at the same time people are changed. A 10-step sequence of activities to insure that planning increases organizational effectiveness is presented, along with some typical implementation problems. (Author/RA)

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A MODEL FOR "COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC, ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING AS A MEANS OF INCREASING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS"

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by

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"Planning" is a word that is frequently heard today among people who are involved in or interested in organizational administration. It is also a word that is misunderstood and abused by many of those who use it.

Planning is an activity that has held great promise as a procedure for resolving many of the problems besetting organizations of all kinds in today's society. Unfortunately the anticipated benefits have failed to materialize from its adoption by organization after organization.

The intent of this paper is to set forth a model which, if applied as described, will lead to significantly greater beneficial impact than has generally been achieved to date.

About three years ago, in 1969, AMA started to help educational organizations to extablish formalized planning programs and to help the participating administrators improve their individual planning skills. While the results of our efforts were enthusiastically endorsed by most of our clients, we felt that we were falling far short of the potential that existed. Certainly we were not being successful in inducing the degree of organizational behavior change that we had established as an objective for ourselves. Progress was slow and difficult for all concerned far beyond our expectation.

Our reference criterion were the business organizations with whom we had worked in previous years. Generally speaking, even in the least sophisticated of these, we were able to move farther and faster.

By the summer of 1971 we had worked with more than 50 educational organizations, including five colleges, three state education departments and more than 40 local school districts and intermediate agencies. In so doing, we became increasingly aware of these differences. Hence, an

increasing amount of staff time was devoted to analyzing the differences in the structure, behavior patterns and attitudes which typically existed in each of these categories or organizations. We also examined our own behavior, attitudes and basic assumptions relative to the organizations which we were trying to help.

The basic conclusion resulting from this analysis was that our approach to organizational planning and development was correct but insufficient.

Critical among our observations were the following:

a) The most fundamental difference between the top management personnel in the business organizations vs. the educational organizations appeared to be their perception of their roles. For many reasons, the top management of educational organizations do not see themselves as either able to or uniquely responsible for coordinating, managing, or leading the process of organizational change and improvement.

   If judged by their behavior, they saw themselves as being responsible for:

   a) Maintaining good relations with the various publics which might cause problems for the organization.
   b) Solving current problems relating to finance, personnel, students facilities, curriculum, etc.
   c) Coping with demands for information or action originating with the Board of Education.

b) The second major conclusion centers around the vagaries of the decision making process in the typical educational organization. For whatever reason, it is extremely difficult, in an educational organization, to generate a decision which will have the effect of producing long term, organization-wide effects.

   In point of fact such decisions are seldom made. More typically, potential decisions are developed in the form of recommendations which are then submitted to a torturous process of review, modification, and piecemeal veto such that the final result is a recommendation consisting of a collection of unrelated or inconsistent elements which lead to the adoption of a program which is doomed to failure from the day of its approval or a decision to resubmit the proposal to further review and modification to the point where the effective decision is-- to maintain the status quo.

   With only rare exceptions, managers in the world of industry and business are firmly convinced that the surest road to

failure is that which results from continuing to do the same old thing in the same old way. Those organizations which are managed by people who do not accept this doctrine soon become so out of touch with the need of those whom they serve that the organizations die or lose their autonomy. Unfortunately our educational organizations tend to emulate the latter group--hence the current social dissatisfaction with our educational institutions.

c) Last but not least among our major conclusions was the recognition of the inadequacy of factual information related to the critical issues in education.

Recognition of the difficulties involved in quantifying educational results or in establishing direct relationships between inputs and results does not change the fact that hard data is not available. Therefore decision making is a highly subjective process. Evaluation is highly subjective which permits failure to be camouflaged behind platitudes and generalities, and more importantly denies the proof of success. Is it any wonder that few educational leaders will risk initiating innovative procedures which are sure to generate criticism when there is little hope of being able to factually demonstrate success even if it occurs.

In summary, it appears to us, that if organizations are to modify their behavior to establish and maintain their relevency to a changing world these three things must occur before planning or any other system or concept can be expected to be effective.

1. The Chief School Officer must perceive his prime responsibility and opportunity as that of ensuring that the organization does adapt to the changing society which it serves.

2. The organization must establish a decision making process which is clearly identified and which will produce significant decisions on a timely basis.

3. Hard data must be generated which will permit increased objectivity in the decision making process and permit proof of success as well as failure.

The above observations served as the basis for the modification of our prior planning model. A description of the current model for managing organization change follows.

The first step shall be to establish a few critical definitions so that we may communicate more effectively as regards this activity.

"Planning" is a categorical term. As such it is easily misapplied in specific situations. However let us first define the categorical term and then apply some qualifiers to narrow the definition for our particular purpose.

Definition - "Planning" is the process by which present decisions are made regarding actions to be taken in the future.

As such, planning may be done by an individual or a group. Decisions reached may relate to a time span of decades, years, months or minutes. Furthermore decisions may be made independently or in conjunction with large numbers of people. Most usefully, individual decisions may be made in a manner which integrates the resultant actions with the actions resulting from other individual decisions. Since we are concerned with planning in, and for organizations this integration of resultant actions is essential if we are to increase the overall effectiveness of the total organization.

Therefore, let us concern ourselves with comprehensive organizational planning.

Definition - "Comprehensive, organizational planning" is the process by which a group of individual, present - decisions determing future actions are made in a manner in which the combined impact of the resultant actions maximizes the progress of the organization towards its objectives in relation to the resources consumed.

There is one additional factor which must be included in our definition--that is the time period involved. Because of the infinite life expectancy of most of our educational and social institutions and the long term relationship between the organization and those whom it serves i.e. students, parents, community, etc. the present decisions reached should be developed with a recognition of the long term impact of the

resultant actions. A conscious decision should be made as to whether to maximize the short term or long term impact. Usually a trade-off is involved. These long term considerations are usually referred to as strategic decisions. Therefore, the kind of planning we are going to consider in our model is "Comprehensive, strategic, organizational planning" defined as follows:

Definition - "Comprehensive, strategic, organizational planning" is the process by which the individual, present - decisions within an organization are made in a manner in which the combined impact of the resultant actions maximizes the progress of the organization toward a rationally predetermined balance between its long term and short term objectives in relation to the resources consumed.

One final definition is required before proceding with the description of the planning model itself. That is the definition of an organization. Typically an organization is defined as a group of people dedicated to a common purpose. As with other loosely defined terms, that definition is correct but insufficient. Before the above mentioned group of people can legitimately be called "an organization" they must in some way be committed to the acceptance of a defined decision-making procedure. Without the definition and acceptance of a decision-making process the people involved may be thought of as an organization only in terms of proximity. Therefore let us define an organization as follows:

Definition - An organization is a collection of resources committed to a common purpose, to be pursued through the application of a predetermined decision-making process.

Within this framework of definitions let us look at a model of

A Comprehensive, Strategic, Organizational Planning Process.

THE MODEL

The model is presented in abreviated form as a sequence of ten steps to be taken to bring about increased organizational effectiveness through the introduction of "planning" as the keystone of the management process.

STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. Establish acceptance on the part of all members of top management of strategic planning as the most important aspect of their role in the organization.

2. Develop an understanding of and commitment to comprehensive, strategic, organizational planning.

3. Establish a clearly defined decision making procedure which will optimize the balance among the quality of decisions, the timeliness of decisions and the acceptance of the decisions by those whose support is required for implementation. The ultimate criteria of effectiveness of the decision making process is the extent to which results achieved are maximized in relation to resources consumed.

4. Analyze the present situation in which the organization finds itself both in terms of the internal conditions which exist and in terms of the external environment in which it must operate during the period for which it is planning.

5. Define the results which the organization aspires to achieve. Begin with idealistic statements of intent and then follow with statements of realistic measureable objectives for which a specific target date is established.

6. Develop one or more long term strategies which specify the means to be employed to achieve the specified objectives of the organization. These strategies should recognize and reflect the priorities of the organization and its relative commitment to long term results achievement vs. the solutions to short term problems.

7. Within the framework of long term objectives, established priorities and selected strategies, develop a series of short term action plans which will maintain current effectiveness to the extent desired and simultaneously create the conditions necessary to achieve the long term objectives.

8. Establish unique responsibility for each person in the organization. Ensure that each person is fully aware of the result for which he is responsible. Generally, avoid holding two or more people responsible for the same result.

9. Determine the information each person in the organization requires for him to determine whether current performance in his area of responsibility is occurring according to plan and ensure that such information is made available to him.

10. Establish a climate within the organization which encourages corrective action to bring performance into line with the plan without emphasis on sanctions for prior inadequacies. In other words, focus on the achievement of results contemplated in the plan rather than on spotlighting mistakes made in the process.

SUMMARY

Planning can be an effective means for increasing the effectiveness of an organization. It will be effective only if it is conceived of as a comprehensive process addressed to the long term objectives of the organization and executed in a manner which provides for the involvement of all levels of the organization with top management giving personal leadership to planning for the organization.

At every point in time, every organization has a plan. The PLAN is simply the sum of the individual decisions which have been made by the individuals who make up the organization.

If the organization is to achieve significantly higher levels of effectiveness, it is obvious that the individuals who are part of the organization must modify their behavior. However since the output of the organization is a function of the combined contributions to the organizational objectives rather than simply the sum of the independent individual accomplishments, it is essential that the organization as a whole, simultaneously modify the interrelationship of the individuals involved. The efficacy of the planning effort will be determined by the skill with which organizational change and individual change are coordinated and integrated to produce a synergistic effect.